

OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

June 11, 2018

Senator Orrin Hatch
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative John Curtis
2236 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Hatch and Representative Curtis,

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of nine member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, and Colorado Mountain Club and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, and backcountry ski and snowshoe on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

On behalf of the outdoor recreation community, thank you for introducing legislation to protect public lands in Emery County, Utah for their conservation and outdoor recreation values. Introduction of the Emery County Public Land Management Act of 2018 is a positive step toward important protections for national public lands in the county. We greatly appreciate the collaborative approach you have implemented in the development of this legislation and your earnest efforts to engage the outdoor recreation community. We look forward to continuing to work with you to identify shared conservation and recreation priorities and to working constructively toward further improvements in the bill.

The Emery County Public Land Management Act of 2018 would protect nearly one million acres of public land, including nearly 530,000 acres of Wilderness and more than 336,000 acres of National Conservation Area, as well as add 54 miles of the Green River to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. We also greatly appreciate that the bill avoids precedent-setting changes to core conservation laws protecting our public lands and safeguards public lands from sell-off by including a reversion of transferred lands back to federal management if they are no longer used as state park.

In addition, we greatly appreciate provisions of the bill to:

- Establish a “non-motorized recreation” seat on the advisory council charged with establishing a management plan and creating subsequent recreation management policies;
- Include Muddy Creek in the Muddy Creek Wilderness Area, and the San Rafael River in the Mexican Mountain and Sids Mountain Wilderness Areas;
- Prohibit of mineral, geothermal leasing, or mining patents in NCAs;



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- Prohibit new irrigation or pumping facilities, conveyances, storage, or hydropower facilities in Wilderness;
- Prohibit federal permitting of water resource facilities in Wilderness areas; and
- Defer controversial provisions related to travel management.

While we greatly appreciate the bill's protections for much of the San Rafael Swell and surrounding lands and rivers, some important areas are left unprotected by the legislation. These places, including 16 miles of potential new Wild and Scenic River on the Uinta and Ouray Reservation, have high recreational value, and, if added to the proposal, would dramatically improve the legislation from the standpoint of outdoor recreation. We appreciate your efforts to engage tribal leadership on this issue, and are ready to assist in any way that would be helpful. We look forward to continuing to work with your offices to precisely define these areas and hope they may be considered for addition to the bill.

Additionally, we look forward to continuing to work with your offices to refine bill language related to climbing management. For climbers, an important part of the Emery County bill is the resolution of issues related to fixed anchors in Wilderness. The area covered in the bill currently includes hundreds of climbing routes with thousands of existing fixed anchors. Most of the climbing routes that could be affected by this legislation are at a place called the San Rafael Reef, an area known to climbers as the "Sandstone Alps," where there are nearly 250 individual climbing routes up to 1,000 feet tall. This is an area with thousands of fixed anchors in place. Much of this area is currently designated as a Wilderness Study Area and is slated for permanent Wilderness designation in the Emery County bill.

We are concerned that:

1. Existing anchors be allowed to remain,
2. That there is a workable process for authorizing new climbing anchors, and
3. Reasonable means be allowed for maintaining/replacing these anchors as needed.

To address this, our goal for the bill is to include legislative language, modeled on existing law for grazing management, that allows the BLM to authorize the management/replacement of the thousands of fixed anchors that already exist within the scope of this bill. Proposed language would state that:

"The use of rock climbing anchors in the Wilderness Areas shall be allowed to continue if established before the date of enactment of this Act, subject to such reasonable regulations, policies, and practices as the Secretary determines to be necessary for effective management and administration."

With the inclusion of this language, the climbing community would enthusiastically support this proposed legislation.

Additionally, we are concerned by the potential effects of the legislation regarding some mountain biking opportunities in Emery County. Specifically, we are concerned that:



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1. Existing trails open to bikes be allowed to remain open, to the extent practicable, using strategies like boundary modifications or clarifications; and
2. If mountain biking opportunities are lost, that there is a workable process to mitigate that loss by authorizing new quality trails open to bikes in the vicinity, with resources to facilitate that process and development.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to identify and address potential conflicts and to ensure that mountain biking opportunities are not lost through this legislation.

Finally, we believe it essential that the bill fully preserves the January 2017 settlement agreement to resolve a legal challenge affecting the BLM's 2008 Price Travel Management Plan. The BLM is obligated under the terms of that settlement to revise the 2008 travel plan, and any legislation must fully preserve the letter and spirit of that agreement.

Thank you for your work on developing permanent protections for national public lands in Emery County, and for your collaborative approach toward developing these protections. We hope you will continue to be open to revisions and refinements, and we look forward to continued work together on our shared recreation and conservation goals.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman
Policy Director
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Erik Murdock, Policy Director, Access Fund
Nathan Fey, Director, Colorado River Stewardship Program, American Whitewater
Aaron Clark, Advocacy Manager, International Mountain Bicycling Association

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Brady Robinson, Executive Director, Access Fund
Wade Blackwood, Executive Director, American Canoe Association
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater
Dave Wiens, Executive Director, International Mountain Bicycling Association
Mark Menlove, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers
Phil Powers, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club
Lee Davis, Executive Director, the Mazamas
Holly Barrass, Interim Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club

